

23 April 2021

Terence Conway
Headteacher
Norham High School
Alnwick Avenue
North Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE29 7BU

Dear Mr Conway

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Norham High School

Following my remote inspection with James Duncan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 24 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require special measures.

This monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 2018.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- fully embed the literacy curriculum into long-term curriculum plans that leaders are currently developing.

Context

- Since the monitoring inspection in December 2019, two new governors have been appointed to the governing body.
- Approximately nine out of 10 pupils were educated at home in the spring term. Over half of vulnerable pupils attended school and around a quarter of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan were educated on site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were being educated at school. Most pupils with an EHC plan and most vulnerable pupils were also being educated at school. A small group of pupils were continuing their education remotely because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Main findings

- The well-being of pupils has been the main driver for leaders' actions at Norham High School in recent months. Pupils told inspectors they felt safe when returning to school after COVID-19 restrictions eased in March. One pupil described the school as being 'like a massive family'. Welcome back meetings for targeted pupils helped them to understand what the return to school would be like. Other pupils came to school wearing masks before the full return. This approach helped pupils to be confident and allowed teachers to focus on the curriculum.
- Leaders have been able to continue with planned improvements to the school curriculum. Curriculum leaders have worked together to develop links across curriculum subjects. Detailed new plans take account of what pupils learn at primary school and the knowledge they will need after leaving Norham High School. Leaders have recognised that they need to address pupils' underdeveloped literacy skills. Work to create a cross-curricular approach to literacy is underway.
- Recent changes to the curriculum take account of how COVID-19 restrictions have affected pupils. In photography, in Year 11, pupils could not access specialist software at home. Teachers therefore adapted the curriculum until pupils returned in March. Leaders in English structured Year 11 pupils' work around the teaching of a novel. Teachers are now using this knowledge to help pupils analyse language and structure. This work means that the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' learning is minimised.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new strategy to develop a love of reading. Teachers record themselves reading to pupils in Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9

and have received training to support pupils with reading. Leaders recognise that this work is in its early stages. There is a clear sense that all staff need to work together to support pupils with reading.

- There is a clear approach to assessment. Regular 'do it now' checks allow teachers to identify gaps in knowledge. For example, in science, teachers know that some Year 10 pupils may need to revisit content in the topic of radioactivity. At the same time, leaders are collecting information about pupils' attitudes to learning. They have identified a small number of pupils in Year 10 who found it hard to engage with remote learning. A 'COVID catch-up pilot' is supporting these pupils to prepare for Year 11.
- Leaders have provided every pupil at the school with a laptop. This is helping pupils to successfully access remote learning when they need to. In the spring term, teachers delivered all subjects through live lessons to pupils. Now that pupils have returned to school, teachers are uploading work for pupils to access if they need to work remotely.
- Leaders have provided effective support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. One parent said that 'regular calls offering support provided reassurance for parents'. Teachers changed the life skills curriculum to include tasks that could be completed in the home. Pupils were contacted regularly by familiar adults to help ease anxieties. This has helped pupils to feel confident about the return to school.
- Governance of the school continues to strengthen. Governors have completed training to allow them to support and challenge leaders. The effect of this is seen in detailed questioning of leaders' curriculum plans. Governors have a clear picture of the school.
- Governors use external support from the local authority and the North Tyneside Learning Partnership to assure themselves that what leaders tell them is accurate. Colleagues supporting the school share the view of inspectors that curriculum plans are more detailed. They describe the work of leaders as 'restoring respect' to Norham High School. Many parents share this view, with one commenting that the staff are 'second to none'.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders for English and technology, the special educational needs coordinator, the leader for safeguarding, the leader of the additionally resourced provision, leaders for Year 7, Year 10 and Year 11, three governors, pupils, teachers, and representatives of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at minutes from governor meetings and curriculum plans for various subjects. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 31 free-text responses, and 60 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth
Her Majesty's Inspector